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Joan Claybrook, President

August 29, 2001

Secretary Spencer Abraham
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

2001-020083 Aug 29 p 2:24

Dear Secretary Abraham:

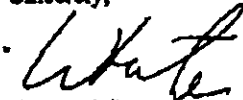
This letter is in reference to the Yucca Mountain preliminary site recommendation hearings announced in the Federal Register on August 21, 2001. We urge you to cancel these hearings and discontinue all site recommendation activities until outstanding technical and regulatory issues have been resolved.

Clearly, the Department of Energy lacks a basis for consideration of site recommendation at this time. In addition to significant scientific uncertainties about the repository project, a safe transportation scenario has not been identified, the required environmental impact statement has not been released, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has not issued licensing regulations, and the DOE is relying on proposed changes to the Siting Guidelines that have yet to be finalized. To prematurely hold hearings now makes a mockery of the process for public participation mandated by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act and dangerously undermines public confidence in the DOE as a fair and unbiased arbiter of the Yucca Mountain repository proposal.

Furthermore, we strenuously object to the announcement of the hearings in Nevada at incredibly short notice during a time of year that many people take vacation. The unjustifiable short timeline for announcing the hearing appears designed to minimize public participation. Today – one week in advance of the hearing scheduled in Las Vegas – information about the venue of the meeting is not available (although the DOE's website inaccurately lists the Suncoast Casino and Hotel). When and if the Department can reasonably consider site recommendation, the public must be afforded clear and adequate notice of the required hearings.

In consideration of these factors, we hope you will agree to cancel the September site recommendation hearings immediately. The public cannot have confidence in any recommendation that arises from such a dramatically flawed process.

Sincerely,



Wenonah Hauter
Director,
Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy and Environment Program

Ralph Nader, Founder

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